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ABSTRACT

A study investigated differences in students' perceptions of dinner time rituals at different stages of their college experiences. Subjects, 348 traditional undergraduate students enrolled in various communication courses at a large midwestern university, completed a survey instrument. Respondents ranged from 18 to 26 with an average age of 20. Responses were categorized into 10 categories under the general categories of verbal or nonverbal communication behavior. Results indicated: (1) no significant main effects for year in college, sex of students, or frequency of home visits; (2) for female students, dinner time ritual behavior was highest during the sophomore year, but lowest during their junior year, while their male counterparts' ratings of dinner time rituals peaked in their junior year; (3) students who reported that only one parent was typically present at dinner reported lower ratings of dinner time rituals than students who reported that both parents were typically present; and (4) ratings of dinner time rituals were lower when students reported that no siblings were typically present at dinner than when siblings were typically present. Findings suggest little support for the idea that ritualistic behavior of college students significantly changes over the college life span, although other factors (such as who is present for dinner) did emerge and warrant further investigation. (Contains 24 references, 2 figures, and 1 table of data.) (RS)

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College students' perceptions of the dinner time ritual: An exploratory cross-sectional analysis of differences over the college experience.

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RUNNING HEAD: Dinner Rituals

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The transition to college life is an important one. First year students experience stress, anxiety, and feelings of homesickness in the wake of moving away from their homes for the first time (Berman & Sperling, 1991; Fisher & Hood, 1987). These individuals enter a new setting filled with uncertainty in which they are unsure of the way things are "supposed" to go and what the experience is "supposed" to be like. They no longer have the daily comfort of the routines and rituals of family life to which they have grown so accustomed (Fisher & Hood, 1987). Of course, for most students, leaving home to live at school does not often result in a complete separation from their family. College students who are geographically able often venture home on weekends and holidays to be close to friends and family. During these visits home, much of the interaction time with family members is likely to center around meals, specifically dinner.

The present study examines college students' perceptions of dinner time rituals. More specifically, this study investigates differences in students' perceptions of dinner time rituals at different stages of their college experiences. As students grow and mature, changes in ritualized behavior are likely to evolve. This paper will begin by examining the transition to college and its effects on students and their family. Next, the importance of rituals in family life will be examined. Finally, dinnertime rituals in particular will be addressed.

The Transition to College

Moving away from home and starting college is an uneasy, unsure time which requires adjustment on the part of both the student and family (Baker & Siryak, 1984; Berman & Sperling, 1991; Fisher & Hood, 1987; Kaczmarek, Matlock, & Franco, 1990; Kenny & Donaldson. 1991; Margolis, 1981). College often forces adolescents to break from old routines and familial life styles and adapt to both residential and academic aspects of their new environment (Fisher & Hood, 1987).

Many students go through periods of acute loneliness, isolation and longing for home during their first year. (Berman & Spelling, 1991). The expanding size of colleges has created an impersonal environment on campus which makes adaptation more difficult (Kaczmarek et al., 1990). Students sometimes feel unacceptable to their freshman peers, or isolated because of financial, religious, racial, and interpersonal differences (Margolis, 1981).

Medalie (1981) describes the college years as a "mini-life cycle". The first year of college includes a realization that childhood is ending and planning for the future must begin. Students feel pressure to perform academically, and they want desperately to find some peer group to which they can belong since they have left their high school haven. Three years later, college seniors have not only made the adjustment to college but are planning for jobs after graduation. Medalie (1981) suggests

conflict can arise with parents during this time because the student no longer feels as attached to the family and is ready to enter the "real world" even if that world is many miles from home.

The transition to college is often seen as a time when adolescents get their first taste of responsibility and autonomy, and attachment and individuation become large contributing factors (Holmbeck & Wandrei, 1993; Kenny & Donaldson, 1991; Margolis, 1981; Medalie, 1981; Rice, Cole, & Lapsley, 1990). The stressful time will often increase adolescents attachment to parents and family to continue feelings of security and belonging (Berman & Spelling, 1991). Resident students report increases in affection between themselves and their parents which facilitated stronger emotional ties. While these students report feeling independent, they also remained affectively connected in some ways (Sullivan & Sullivan, 1980). Considering this, it is appropriate to next discuss family rituals, which have great potential importance in helping students manage autonomy and connection needs as they experience this major life transition.

Rituals and Their Importance to Family Life

Rituals have been conceptualized in multiple ways by various scholars. Mead (1973) defined rituals as patterned social interactions which include role prescriptions. Bennett, Wolin, and McAvity (1988) explain that rituals occur at predictable times and places. Bossard and Boll (1950), in an early study of

family rituals, emphasize that rituals are repetitious, highly valued and symbolic. They further explain that rituals are often interactional experiences focused on family living which have some kind of emotional impact on the participants.

Many scholars recognize the symbolic nature of rituals. For example, Fiese and Kline (1993) purport that "family rituals may be distinguished from more general family organization by the emphasis placed on the symbolic quality and affective meaning of family rituals" (p. 291). Wolin and Bennett (1984) define ritual as "a symbolic form of communication that, owing to the satisfaction that family members experience through its repetition, is acted out in a systematic fashion over time" (p. 401). This symbolic nature of rituals makes them inherently communicative. People attach meaning to the roles, routines, and practices of which rituals consist.

The symbolism surrounding rituals contributes to the important part they play in family living. Rituals are essential to family culture because they transmit the goals and values of the family to each generation (Bossard & Boll, 1950). Rituals serve to establish and stabilize a family identity for the members throughout life. They define rules and roles and allow each member to experience a sense of belonging (Wolin & Bennett, 1984). In addition, they function to organize daily life for family members. Fiese (1992) notes that the symbolic significance of rituals extends through generations and

continuously confirms group membership. Roberts (1988) claims that "ritual works as both a maintainer and creator of social structure for individuals, families and social communities, as well as a maintainer and creator of world view" (p. 15). Lastly, Imber-Black and Roberts (1993) call rituals "a lens through which we can see our emotional connections to our parents, siblings, spouse, children and dear friends" (p. 62).

Rituals are valuable to family members because they offer security and a sense of belonging (Fiese, 1992; Fiese & Kline, 1993; Wolin & Bennett, 1984). Patterned interaction allows for stability and continuity, and can act against change and therefore offer security and predictability (Wolin and Bennett, 1984). Rosenthal and Marshall (1988) concur that rituals are helpful whenever individuals experience change because they offer a sense of order rather than disruption.

Clearly, continued family ritualistic interaction could prove very appealing for those entering college and leaving home for the first time. Consistent with this, Fisher and Hood (1987) asked freshmen college students to describe their feelings of homesickness and one of the categories that emerged was "missing daily routines, feeling lost without routines (p.433)". In addition, Fiese and Kline (1993), found a positive relationship between the symbolic quality associated with family rituals and college student self-esteem, and a negative relationships between family rituals and college student anxiety. Both self-esteem and

anxiety are salient issues among the college population as stated earlier.

Family rituals are not stagnant however, and the negotiation of them can lead to conflict when rituals begin to carry different values for parents and children. For instance, even though the children are leaving home and gaining independence, many parents still expect the children to give as much time and energy to family rituals as they always have and sometimes the children would just rather not continue the rituals (Bossard & Boll, 1950). Sometimes, rituals become hollow, or lose their significance. In these instances, students dread returning home because they feel the ritual no longer applies to them and that their family no longer understands how they have changed as individuals (Fiese, 1992).

Ritual behavior at dinner time was chosen for this study because it is presumably the most frequently occurring family ritual among college students and their families. For example, when students make a weekend visit home, they are to likely to eat dinner with their family at some period. Therefore, since rituals can strengthen family ties, dinner time rituals are especially important in that they likely serve this important function most frequently during the college years.

Family rituals are subject to change. Roberts (1988) argues that "through the use of repetition, familiarity, and transformation of what is already known, new behaviors, actions,

and meanings can occur" (p.11). Consistent with this, one would expect that ritualistic behavior would be susceptible to change during the college years. As students grow and mature, rituals might become more important to them because they are often finding life mates and may want to carry these rituals into a new family. However, the importance of rituals could also decrease because these young adults may increasingly value their autonomy and their ability to start their own traditions and rituals which can differ from those with which they were raised. In addition, if Medalie's (1981) conceptualization of the college years as a mini-life cycle is accurate, it is appropriate to investigate perceptions of rituals at various points during the college years to discover if differences exist.

RQ1: Does ritualistic behavior at dinner time differ depending on the student's year in college?

While much research has been conducted concerning sex role socialization in the family (see Carter, 1987 and Boudreau, Sennot, & Wilson, 1986), no research has directly examined sex differences with respect to ritualistic behavior in the family. However, research on parental attachment of college students suggests some possibilities where sex differences could influence family ritual behavior. For example, Berman and Sperling (1991) found that college men's maternal concern decreased over time, while college women's stayed the same. Similarly, Kenny and Donaldson (1991) concluded that college women are more attached

to their parents during the college years than are college men and that this attachment was positively associated with social competence and fewer psychological symptoms. It seems reasonable that attachment will be related to ritualistic behavior and thus warrants investigation of sex differences in family ritual behavior.

RQ2: Does the ritualistic behavior at dinner time differ depending on the sex of the college student?

How often students actually visit home could possibly have an effect on ritualistic behavior. For example, students who go home every weekend, might still be fairly dependent on family lifestyle, whereas students who rarely go home might have greater independence. These differences could clearly affect their ritual involvement.

RQ3: Does ritualistic behavior at dinner time differ depending on frequency of students' visits home to see their family?

Rituals provide a sense of belonging and often entail prescribed rules and roles. The larger the family, arguably the more important rituals become to give everyone their identity and a role to play. It might also be the case that the more family members are present, the less ritualistic behavior can occur because there are too many people to coordinate. This research question explores the importance of the presence or absence of various family members to ritualistic behavior.

RQ4: How does the presence of various family members affect students' perceptions of ritualistic behavior at dinner time?

Finally, while much of the research on rituals includes dinner time ritual as a significant practice, no previous research has focused exclusively on specific dinner rituals. In order to create a typology of typical dinner rituals (not special occasion dinners), we ask the following question.

RQ5: What specific ritualistic behaviors will respondents report frequently occur at their typical family dinners?

Methodology

Respondents

Three-hundred-seventy four college students enrolled in various communication courses at a large midwestern university participated in this study. Data provided by nontraditional students or students who left major portions of the survey incomplete (n=27) were not analyzed leaving a remainder of 348 students (207 females, 141 males, 132 first year, 42 sophomores, 75 juniors, 99 seniors). Respondents ranged from 18 to 26 with an average age of 20. A large majority (91%) of the sample were Caucasian.

Respondents completed a survey instrument which contained three sections. The first section ascertained basic demographic information (i.e. age, sex, race, year in school), as well as

assessed information concerning the frequency of "non-holiday" visits home and which family members typically are present at dinner time meals during these visits. The second section measured students' perceptions of the extent to which their family dinner time is ritualistic when they visit home. The third section was an open-ended question asking respondents to describe typical family dinner rituals they experience when they visit home.

Dinner Time Rituals

This was operationalized using a slightly modified dinner time setting scale from the Family Rituals Questionnaire (FRQ; Fiese & Kline, 1993). The FRQ is a 56-item forced choice questionnaire derived significantly from the Wolin and Bennett Family Ritual interview (Wolin & Bennett, 1984). The FRQ assesses degree of family rituals for seven settings: dinner time, weekends, vacations, annual celebrations, special celebrations, religious holidays, cultural and ethnic traditions. For purposes of greater simplicity in completing the survey, as well as greater precision in assessing the extent to which dinner time is perceived as ritualistic, the eight items comprising the dinner time scale were slightly adapted in order to use a five point Likert scale instead of a forced choice option.

FRQ has been found to be internally consistent. In two separate studies conducted, Fiese and Kline (1993) report Chronbach's alphas of .84 and .87 for the dinner time scale, and

test retest reliability is reported to be .88 over a 4-week period. Chronbach alpha for the modified scale was .83 for the current study. The factor structure is stable, and construct validity for the scale has been reported (Fiese, Hooker, Kotary, and Schwagler; 1993).

The coding scheme for the open ended responses emerged from the data. Two hundred ninety eight respondents provided a total of 953 individual rituals (an average of three rituals per person). The unit of analysis was each ritual mentioned as opposed to each sentence of the response. For example, "we eat in the living room around the coffee table while watching T.V." mentions two rituals: where you eat, and that you watch television. Descriptions and examples of the major categories and subcategories are as follows.

First, the typology was divided into two primary categories of verbal communication behaviors and nonverbal communication behaviors. Next, the supercategories and subcategories were developed within this framework. There were five supercategories and four subcategories under verbal communication. There were seven supercategories and four subcategories under nonverbal communication. This yielded a total of twelve supercategories and eight subcategories.

The first supercategory, conflict/argument/nagging, refers to verbal disputes that occur at dinner time. Examples include "brother and sister frequently fighting, my dad then fighting

with my brother" and "my dad scolds my brother for his terrible table manners"

The next supercategory, discussion, referred to conversations. This category was subdivided into four parts: discussions about world events, discussions about days events and catching up with one another, complaining or complimenting, and other discussion.

Prayer was the third supercategory. This includes any reference to saying grace before the meal. For example, "my father always says grace before we eat".

The fourth supercategory was humor/teasing/play. This refers to responses that mentioned laughter, joking, or teasing. For example, responses like "we laugh and joke when we eat" and "father always complains (jokingly) that he does everything" were included in this category.

The fifth supercategory under verbal communication was miscellaneous verbal communication such as "mom says, 'dinner's ready, fix your plates' or "I always ask if they're done with a certain food, 'is everyone done with the noodles?'".

The sixth supercategory, now under nonverbal communication behaviors, dealt with roles. This category included responses which specified who was responsible for what tasks. Examples are: "father always makes the drinks for everyone", "when people want seconds or just need something, my mom gets up", and "the table is set by my little sister".

Restrictions and rules was the seventh supercategory. This included any mention of rules that were expected to be followed or behaviors which were not allowed. "The boys never have to do dishes", "everyone is supposed to be at dinner, unless they call", and "no phone calls during dinner" are examples of responses in this category.

The eighth supercategory, television, is rather straightforward. This includes any mention that the television is on or that television is watched during dinner. For example, "we usually eat in front of the t.v and watch jeopardy".

Environment was the ninth supercategory. This was divided into the two subcategories of seating arrangement and place of meal. Statements about where people sit at the table and where the meal takes place were included in these categories. If participants mentioned that they usually go out to eat, this was placed in with place of meal.

Chronemics was the tenth supercategory. This category was also divided into two subcategories, time of day, and day of week. "We usually eat dinner late, around 8:00 because my dad works" and "Sunday evenings we always get together as a family" are examples in these categories respectively.

The eleventh supercategory was participants. Responses which specified who was usually present or absent from the meal were placed in this category. Examples included: "my boyfriend always eats with us", and "my brother is never around".

Finally, nonverbal miscellaneous was the last supercategory. This category included references to specific foods that were eaten, table set up, and references to pets. It should be noted that an attempt was made to further divide both the verbal and nonverbal miscellaneous categories, however, the responses were so varied that the frequencies were extremely low. There were no responses which occurred often enough to justify new categories.

After the development of the dinner time rituals typology, 10 percent of the responses were coded jointly by the two coders. Following this training period, a different sample of 25 of the data was coded independently by the two coders in order to achieve intercoder reliability (Scott's pi = .84). Given this high reliability and the large number of responses, the total sample was then divided equally between the two coders.

Results

Research Question One

In order to investigate whether perceptions of dinner time ritual behavior would differ depending on the student's year in college, a One-way ANOVA (dinner ritual questionnaire by year in college) was employed. Results suggested no two groups were significantly different [$F(3,343) = .77$, N.S.].

Research Question Two

In order to investigate whether perceptions of dinner time ritual behavior would differ depending on the sex of the college students, a T-test was employed. Results suggested the two

groups were not significantly different (t = .54; df = 299; N.S.).

In order to further investigate the potential interaction effect between sex of student and year of college, a 2X4 factorial ANOVA was employed, and results indicated a strong interaction effect [F=(3,346) = 4.89, p < .002]. In order to more clearly understand this finding, t-tests were conducted comparing women and men for each year of college. Results indicated that differences between the two groups in the Junior year of college was responsible for the effect, with male students (M = 3.16) reporting significantly higher ratings of dinner rituals than females (M = 2.49) (t = 2.73, df = 72 p=.01), as represented in Figure 1.

Insert Figure 1 here

Research Question Three

The third research question asked how does ritualistic behavior at dinner time differ depending on frequency of students' visits home to see their family. A One-way ANOVA revealed that no significant differences occurred between the seven possible categories that assessed frequency of students' visits home [F(6,307) = 1.83, N.S.].

Research Question Four

In order to investigate how the presence of various family members affect students' reports of dinner time ritual behavior, a 2X2 factorial ANOVA (presence of sibling(s) by presence of parents on ratings of dinner time rituals) was employed. The presence of sibling(s) factor compared students who visit home who typically have at least one sibling present (n=182) and those students who do not typically have any siblings present at dinner time (n=118). The presence of parents factor compared students who typically have both parents present at dinner (n=228) and those students who report only one parent typically present at dinner (n=72).

Results of the analysis indicated main effects for both the presence of siblings and the presence of parents. The main effect for the presence of siblings indicated that college students reported greater levels of ritualized dinner time behavior when at least one sibling was typically present ($M = 2.92$) than when no sibling was typically present ($M = 2.59$) [$F(1,299) = 9.33$, $p = .002$]. The main effect for the presence of parents indicated that college students reported greater levels of ritualized dinner time behavior when both parents were typically present ($M = 2.92$) than when only one parent was typically present ($M = 2.38$) [$F(1,299) = 23.87$, $p < .001$].

A strong interaction effect between siblings present and parents present on ratings of family dinner ritual behavior was

also indicated [F(1,299) = 10.01, p = .002]. Four groups were created (one group for each of the possible combinations of parents and sibling presence), and a One-way ANOVA [F(3,296) = 15.8, p < .00001] with a post-hoc Tukey procedure revealed that those students who typically have only one parent present (and no siblings present) rated dinner time ritual behavior lower than the other three remaining groups. That is mean ratings of dinner ritual behavior was significantly lower for this group (M = 2.00) than ratings for where only one parent, but at least one sibling was typically present (M = 2.76), where two parents and no sibling was typically present (M = 2.85), and where two parents and at least one sibling was typically present (2.95). No other significant difference between any other combination of groups existed. See figure 2 for a clear illustration of this interaction effect.

Insert Figure 2 here

Research Question Five

Analysis of the open-ended responses resulted in the typology of dinner time rituals described earlier. The categories with the most responses were roles (n=132), discussion of days events (n=123), and nonverbal miscellaneous (n=115), followed by restrictions and rules (n=82) and prayer (n=75).

Please see table 1 for frequencies and percentages of all categories.

Insert Table 1 here

Discussion

The present study examined college students' perceptions of dinner time rituals over the college life span. Surprisingly, there were no significant main effects for year in college, sex of student, or frequency of visits. Significant results were obtained for the interaction effect between year in college and sex of student, and the effect of presence of various family members at dinner time on perceptions of ritualistic behavior. The lack of significant differences of ritualistic behavior among students at different grade levels suggests that rituals are rather enduring and stable over time.

As indicated in Figure 1, results exhibited a significant interaction effect between sex of the college student and year in college on perceived dinner time ritual behavior. For female students, dinner time ritual behavior was highest during the sophomore year, but lowest during their junior year, while their male counterparts' ratings of dinner time rituals peaked in their junior year. This finding is difficult to interpret. One possible explanation is that the results are due to statistical

chance, since previous research does not directly appear to support these results.

The results however, could be related to complex issues that arise during the "mini-life cycle" that college students experience. For example, students often encounter feelings of alienation and depression known as the sophomore slump (Medalie, 1981). Medalie (1981) notes that when sophomores seek counseling during this time, they are often advised to refocus on family attachment. Perhaps female students are more likely to seek professional assistance during this time, and seek haven in ritualized family behavior, while male students utilize other means of coping. Perhaps, male students are most likely to seek solace in family ritual behavior in their junior year when they are beginning to feel the pressure of finding a career which can support themselves and possibly a mate (presumably more than female students, who might not have as strong of societal pressure to do so). Certainly, there are no clear answers in this somewhat curious finding, but future research should further explore gender differences in the importance of family rituals throughout the college life cycle.

The second major finding in this study is that presence (and absence) of various family members significantly affected students' perceptions of dinner time ritual behavior. Main effects for both parental presence and sibling presence were

found, along with an interesting interaction effect between the two.

First, the issue of parental presence should be considered. Students who reported that only one parent was typically present at dinner reported lower ratings of dinner time rituals than students who reported that both parents were typically present. The absence of one parent may be the result of divorce. Families that exhibit traditional characteristics may have more stability and possibly more rituals for family time because of the symbolic importance attached to it. They may try to keep the family structure by doing things the way they have always been done and resisting change. Couples who have divorced on the other hand, might exhibit a lack of stability and where the family is less stable, perhaps so to are the family rituals.

Another possibility with regard to the single parent finding is that a step-parent's presence might inhibit ritualistic behavior because the rituals from the original family can no longer be carried out in quite the same way. Divorce often puts family members in an ambiguous status where roles become less well defined (Johnson, 1988). The new family member or possibly blended family members may alter rituals at dinner time as well as other times.

The presence of siblings is another important consideration with regard to dinner time rituals. Ratings of dinner time rituals were lower when students reported that no siblings were

typically present at dinner than when siblings were typically present. Arguably, the more family members present, the more roles and rules are needed to ensure coordination of daily activities such as dinner time. Conversely, the less people involved, the greater the flexibility, especially when there is only one parent and one child.

The main effects just discussed need to be viewed in light of the interaction effect between presence of parents and presence of siblings. As is evident in Figure 2, students who reported that only one parent and no siblings were typically present reported the lowest instance of dinner time ritual behavior. The other combinations were not significantly different from one another. In fact, when siblings are present with only one parent the ratings were similar to when siblings are present as well as both parents. It is possible that presence of more members creates a sense of family which perpetuates the importance of rituals. It may also be the case that a minimum threshold (two people) exists at which point family rituals are not observed as strictly, if at all. Further research should investigate the relationship between rituals and family togetherness. In other words, who is present at dinner might be largely a function of what the rituals are and vice versa.

In addition to the findings discussed above, this study was successful in adapting a modified version of the Dinner Time

subscale of the Family Ritual Questionnaire (Fiese & Kline, 1993). Results indicate that there is great potential for adaptability of this scale without threat to its internal validity.

Finally, analysis of the open-ended responses yielded a typology of dinner time rituals. This typology allows us to move from global to more specific understandings of ritual behavior. For example, it is interesting to note which categories had the most student responses reported: discussion, roles, restrictions, and prayer. These specific rituals appear to provide continuity and allow for "catch up" time, which can be so important in times of transition. Not surprisingly though, it is difficult to find patterns among all rituals reported, since by definition, rituals are often idiosyncratic. Consistent with this, the third largest category was "nonverbal other" which included such varied responses as how pets ate the leftovers, and in which direction condiments were passed during the dinner meal.

Limitations and Future Research

As with any cross-sectional study design, these data provide a snapshot picture for which the accuracy is unknown. This study was conducted in the final month of the school year which sees college seniors verging on graduation, while first year students who were anxious eight months ago, have now settled into the college routine. Results might have varied if the data were collected during the first week of school when first-year

students are unsure about college life, and seniors perceive graduation to still be somewhat far off.

The inherent shortcomings of self-report data could also influence the results of this study. For example, college students may wish to appear more independent than they actually are or to misrepresent the extent to which rituals exist in their family. It is equally possible that the respondents forgot, overestimated, or underestimated the amount of visits home and other answers regarding ritual behavior. Problems with recall and perceptual biases often influence results of studies using retrospective self report data (Metts, Sprecher, & Cupach, 1991).

Lastly, while the presence or absence of various family members (specifically parents and siblings) at dinner time appear to play a role in ritualistic behavior, the data do not reflect a clear picture. For example, when students reported that only one parent was typically present at dinner, there is no indication of the reason for this. Divorce, death, and parents who work evenings would all be possible explanations that each cast different light onto any interpretations. Similarly, it is unknown if siblings are absent by choice or if geographical location (working or attending school out of state) makes attending dinners on a regular basis an impossibility. Obviously, each case has its own set of implications.

This study suggested that who is present at dinner time is strongly related to perceptions of dinner time rituals. Future research in the area of family rituals needs to examine satisfaction with family life and family dynamics as predictors of family ritual behavior and vice versa. Further research is warranted to explore more thoroughly the effects family members have on dinner time rituals and family rituals in general.

In addition, the majority of the respondents in this study were Caucasian. Future research should extend the study of family ritual to other cultures or co-cultures. It is probable for example, that the results of this study would be different if more of the students were African American, Asian or Latino because of stronger or weaker identification with family and tradition.

In conclusion, the present study found little support that ritualistic behavior of college students significantly changes over the college life span, but other factors (i.e. who is present at dinner) did emerge which warrant further investigation. Finally, the typology created provides a first look into the specific communication behaviors associated with dinner time rituals, providing a more specific understanding of such rituals, along with opening up new areas of future inquiry.

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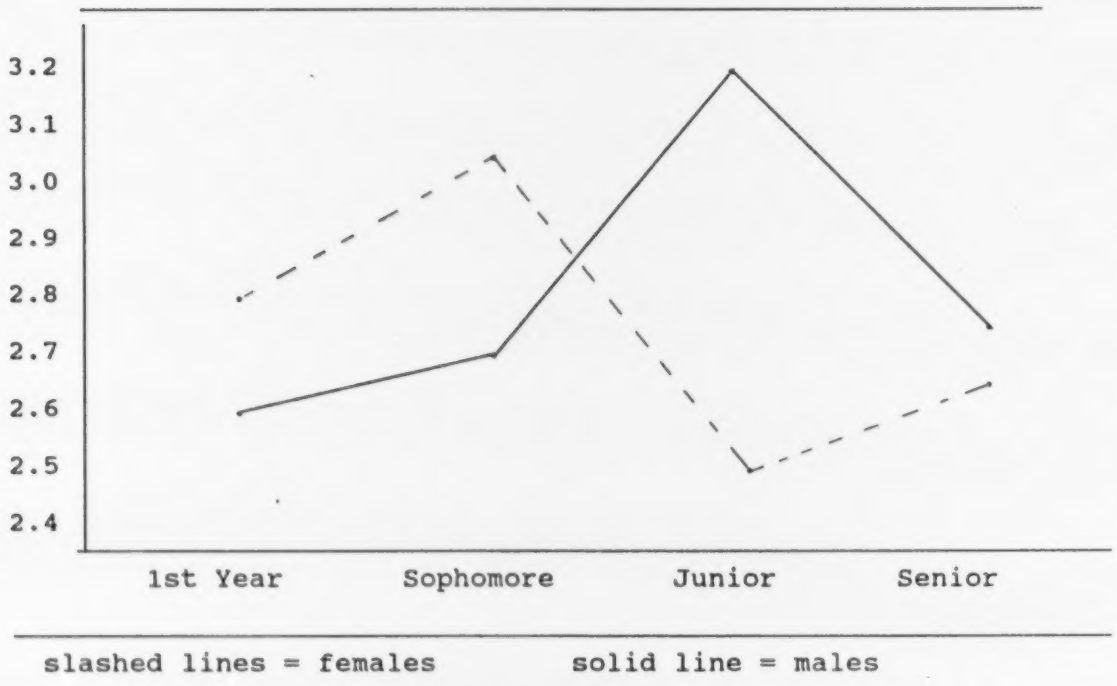
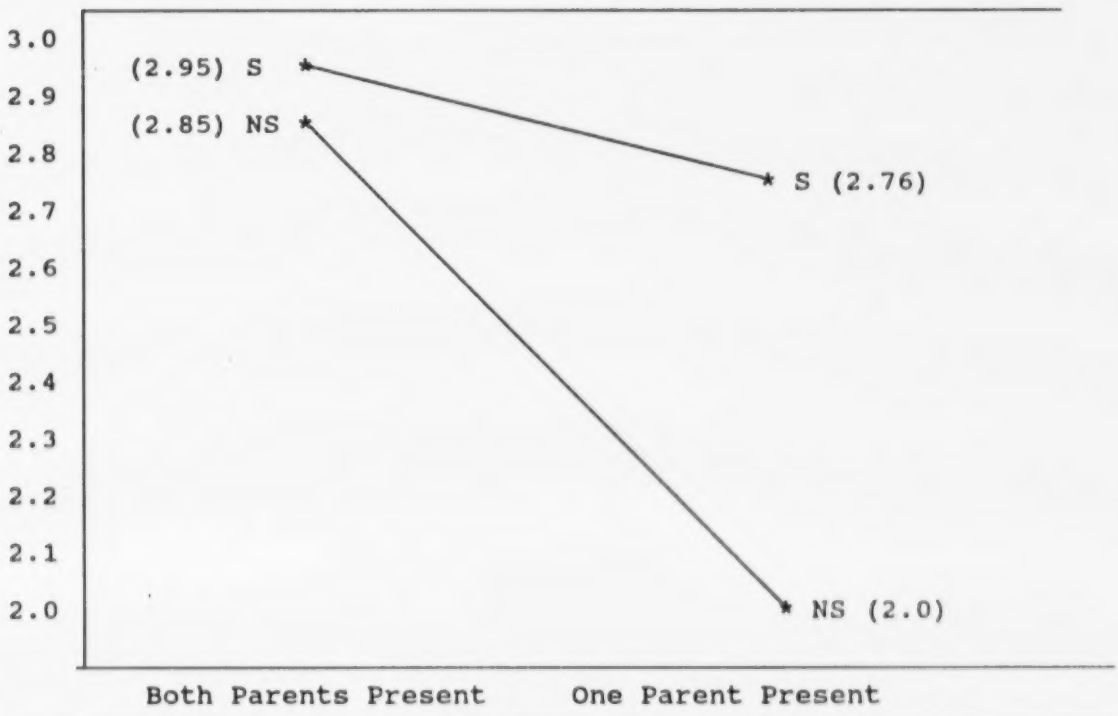
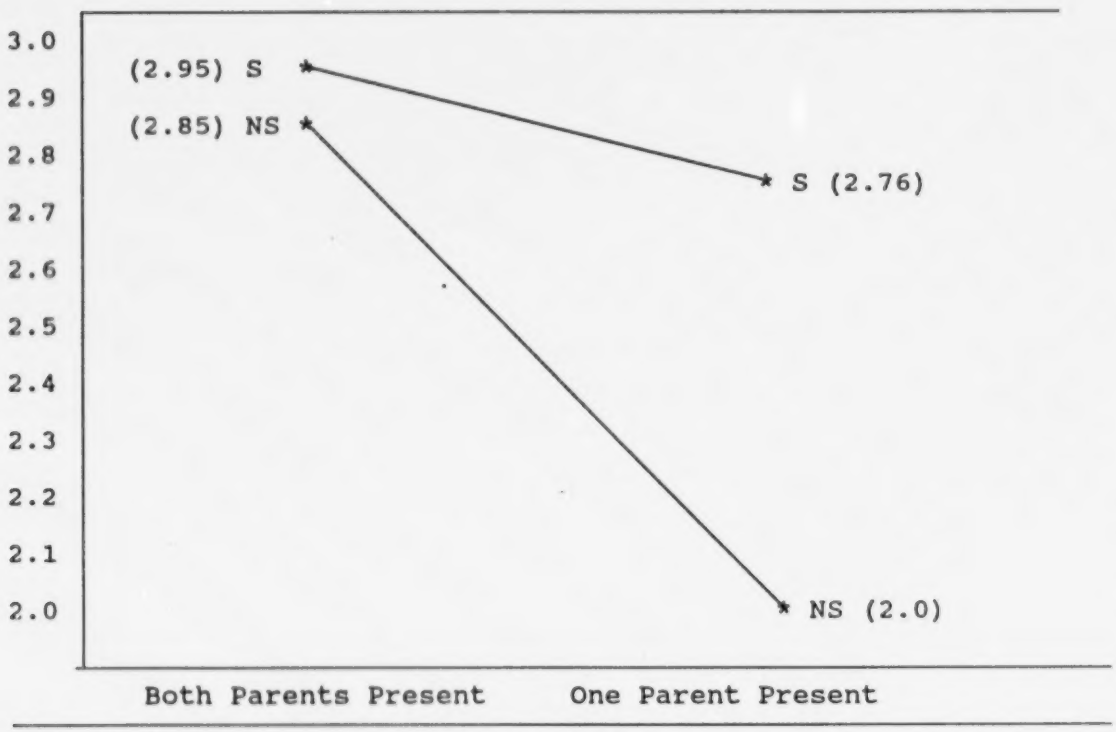


Figure 1. Interaction Effect for Year in College and Sex of Students on Perceptions of Mean Ratings of Family Dinner Rituals



S = Sibling(s) Present, NS = No Sibling Present

Figure 2. Interaction Effect for Presence of Parents and Presence of Siblings on Mean Ratings of Family Dinner Time Rituals



S = Sibling(s) Present, NS = No Sibling Present

Figure 2. Interaction Effect for Presence of Parents and Presence of Siblings on Mean Ratings of Family Dinner Time Rituals

TABLE 1

Typology of dinner time rituals, total frequencies and percentages reported by individuals

I. Verbal Communication		
A. Conflict/ Argument/ Nagging	37	(4%)
B. Discussion		
1. World events	10	(1%)
2. Days events/ catching up	123	(13%)
3. Complaining / complimenting	27	(3%)
4. Other discussion	69	(7%)
C. Prayer	75	(8%)
D. Humor/ Teasing/ Play	43	(5%)
E. Verbal miscellaneous	28	(3%)
II. Nonverbal Communication		
A. Roles	132	(14%)
B. Restrictions and Rules	82	(9%)
C. Television	49	(5%)
D. Environment		
1. Seating arrangement	54	(6%)
2. Place of meal	43	(5%)
E. Chronemics		
1. Time of day	20	(2%)
2. Day of week	20	(2%)
F. Participants	26	(3%)
G. Nonverbal miscellaneous	115	(12%)
Total Responses	953	(100%)